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International Writing Program Archive of Residents' Work

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## Writing Sample

Freedom Nyamubaya

Includes "Introduction," "Poetry," "A Mysterious Marriage," "Western Expatriate in Africa," "The Works of Mudzepete," "A career for life," "Giving Up," "Secrets," "A Different Kind of Love," "Love" and "Woman Pen Pusher."

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Freedom NYAMUBAYA

Selections from  
*On the Road Again: Poems During and After the National  
Liberation of Zimbabwe* (n/p: ZPH, 1998; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

### **Introduction**

Now that I have put my gun down  
For almost obvious reasons  
The enemy still is here invisible  
My barrel has no definite target

Now

Let my hands work –  
My mouth sing –  
My pencil write –  
About the same things my bullet  
aimed at.

### **Poetry**

One person said,  
you are not a poet,  
but forgot that,  
poetry is an art and –  
Art is meaningful rhythm.

Now what is rhythm  
If I may ask?  
Some say it's marching syllables,  
Others say it's marching sounds,  
But tell me how you marry the two.

We fought Shakespeare on the battlefield  
Blacks fought the Boers with their spears  
These are marching syllables  
And is art to some,  
But how can I marry the two?

How about a different rhythm?

People die in the ghettos,  
From police raids and army shots.  
Workers suffocate under coal mines,  
Digging the coal they can't afford to buy  
For cooking daily to feed themselves.  
Poetic stuff this.

Then let's agree to disagree –  
Art serves.

### **A Mysterious Marriage**

Once upon a time  
there was a boy and a girl  
forced to leave their home  
by armed robbers.  
The boy was Independence  
The girl was Freedom.  
While fighting back, they got married.

After the big war they went back home.  
Everybody prepared for the wedding  
Drinks and food abounded,  
Even the disabled felt able.  
The whole village gathered waiting  
Freedom and Independence  
were more popular than Jesus.

Independence came  
But Freedom was not there.  
An old woman saw Freedom's shadow passing,  
Walking through the crowd, Freedom to the gate.  
All the same, they celebrated for Independence.

Independence is now a senior bachelor  
Some people still talk about him  
Many others take no notice  
A lot still say it was a fake marriage.  
You can't be a husband without a wife.  
Fruitless and barren Independence staggers to old  
Age,

Since her shadow, Freedom, hasn't come.

### **Western Expertiate in Africa**

It's not charity, it's a contract!  
ZIMCORD pays for it all.  
How good is your good heart.  
Good Samaritans of the century?  
How much do you love the people of the trees?  
From Cape to Cairo,  
Inside the warm heart of Africa:  
A new invasion of military dollars!

Away from narrow roads and crowded housing,  
Away from rain and snow in winter,  
With millions of unemployed at home  
Good at foreign, poor at home affairs,  
How determined is your determination?  
Your good heart needs repairing:  
Africa, a dumping ground of the dollar debris.

Aren't you tired of sight-seeing?  
How nice these forests and wild life are?  
Please take a photograph, the grazing animals  
Victoria Falls to Zimbabwe ruins,  
Kilimanjaro to the heart of Nairobi,  
Trotting from one tourist resort to another,  
The expertiate regains his strength.

Mr. Expert, how many native words are on your  
tongue?  
And how many hungry people have you fed?  
What did you say to the waving kids?  
And the naked bodies, did they shake you?  
Did you cry for the skinny youths?  
Did you speak to those aged?  
No, you never saw any?  
They don't live in highways, in tourist

Progressive racists, waving the flag of salvation!  
Grilling blacks back home

Those Briton rioters in Britain.  
Wasn't Birmingham and Liverpool built on their  
    Slaving backs?  
Today black need shipping back to Africa.  
Where are those well-intentioned nerves?  
All you feel is a little embarrassment.

Greet the home of democracy, America  
It's normal, blacks are rebellious.  
How about Australia, who is an Aborigine  
Wandering in the desert, fighting for land rights?  
For, a little cruelty for the blacks, says the Mayor  
    Of Johannesburg  
Is no defiance of democracy.

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Selections from  
*Dusk of Dawn*  
(Harare: College Press Publishers, 2001 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)

### **The Works of Mudzepete**

Firstly he was lying on his back. Five minutes later, he was lying on the right side, then on the left, and on his back again. Finally he sat on the rock with his hands supported by his legs, holding his high cheek bones. I could see that he was restless but it had started when he came back from the toilet. He had taken over forty minutes and I wondered why he had taken so much time.

Many people knew Temba as one of the most disciplined and he used to be nicknamed "The priest" by a lot of his friends. Up to now I don't understand why he decided to take this *mudzepete*, dagga. Temba started sweating. Vigorously he pulled a white handkerchief from his pocket to wipe out the sweat. I guess~ he was trying to convince himself that he was fine.

As he tried to reach his gun so that he could stand up he heard a distant helicopter sound and quickly tightened up his

gun belt. Indeed there were four Dakotas, six choppers, Jet bombers and one small one which used to be called “spy plane” that always flew higher.

Sometimes people would argue whether our ancestral spirits were practically involved in determining the action and outcome of a battle or that they boosted our morale and inspired us through what they stood for. In fact a lot believed the ancestors were in action at all times and that they knew what would happen each day.

The security forces had been misinformed and started deploying paratroopers on the wrong side of the mountain range. Everyone knew that battle was meant for us but remained in cover to observe what would follow next. Temba just started running towards one huge rock about hundred metres from the camping place. “Hey! We are here? You are lost! Please come this way!” he shouted, waving his white handkerchief. “Hey comrades? don’t be cowards. We are here to fight! Why are you hiding in the bush and everyday demanding *sadza* and chicken from the *povo* when you are such cowards?” Temba shouted madly.

By the time the detachment security tried to catch him the spotter plane had spotted him. The radio worked wonders and in less than ten minutes choppers had started business. 12:00 midday was the wrong time to start with air raids. Indeed they did not leave until 5:00 pm when it started getting dark. I was sure that Temba didn’t mean to sell out but the truth was, he had sold out. From the back Temba heard a thick voice, “Surrender or else!”

Temba dropped his gun and ammunition, raised his hands and started moving backwards slowly and cautiously. The two soldiers moved towards Temba to try and catch him by hand. Among the four dead-looking bodies lying on the ground was one comrade, Chimsoro, whose two feet had been chopped. He was groaning with pain.

Chimsoro saw what was going on and forgot about his pain. He shot at one of the Rhodesian soldiers who was in front. Little did he know that it was a whole bunch of them. The shot from Chimsoro helped Temba run away but without any weapon. Temba ran like a whirlwind using every tactic he had learnt but the Rhodesians were in hot pursuit. Knowing that he did not have any gun, they wanted to get him alive.

After ten kilometres of non-stop marathon the terrain changed. One could see a village beginning from the mountain slope. The soldiers were still in hot pursuit and kept firing in the air. Temba was about a hundred metres away from them when he sighted a woman hiding away from the gun shots. Next to the woman was a water well and a long thirty-litre drum which had been brought for cleaning after it had been used to store some home brewed beer over the weekend.

Temba was exhausted. His tongue hung out like a tired dog's after chasing a bush buck. He dived into the drum making it fall on the side. Scared but determined the woman ran and turned the drum upside down and started cleaning it with sand and grass, pouring water all over the drum.

"Hey *mbuya*!\* Did you see any terrorist pass through?"

"Yes, *ngosii* yes, yes, *mbanya lapa mugwagwa*, please follow this road into the bush." Trembling and urinating deliberately to save the comrade, she pleaded. clapping her hands, and then the soldiers went away.

He was lucky that it was getting dark.

For three hours Temba got stuck in the drum under the Instructions of the woman who had told him not to move until she had banged the drum five times as a signal for safety. By the time he got out he was hopelessly drunk from the heavy beer smell and residue in the drum.

\**mbuya* —grandmother

### **A career for life**

I am a retired soldier  
Not a retired revolutionary  
I still walk around armed  
With tools and ideas of how to grow more maize

There are still those of us  
Who consciously organize and create

Africa's man-made problems and make  
Our suffering a career for interested scholars

### **Giving Up**

I felt like shedding tears  
But my eyes were dry

Felt like shouting  
But had no voice

Wanted to scratch  
without itching  
It was torturing, bitter  
Painful and hot  
Out there!  
Difficult to give up war  
Especially when you volunteered.

### **Secrets**

*Amai* \*I wanted to write you a letter to say;  
I now can speak many languages  
Chipso is at Osthisa pregnant  
Theresa is now a commander  
Anna lost her leg In the battle  
They beat me the first day I arrived at Tembwe

I was raped by the security commander  
Jim lost his big toe from the Jigger fleas  
Many died at Nyadzonya from hunger  
I have got a new Afrikan name now  
You probably know about all these things  
Last but not least I wanted to tell you  
That I love you very much.

\**amai*--mother



## **A Different Kind of Love**

Some people loved this country so much  
That they died for it  
Their skeletons are scattered all over Zimbabwe

The skeletons are still dying for this country  
As they turn into useful manure  
The survivors do not seem to love  
this country at all  
Now  
Zimbabwe is dying  
On their behalf  
Who loves Zimbabwe to save it from dying for us?

## **Love**

Love is a funny animal  
It has been bothering me  
Everyday it knocks  
At my bedroom door  
Asking for attention

I tried to ignore this creepy creature  
I tell you it's troublesome  
I tried to pretend as if I could not hear  
This animal is persistent  
I tried to cut it with a sharp razor  
And fried it in boiling oil  
Where it exists it never dies.

## **Woman Pen Pusher**

I am a writer  
Have written about hunger  
About wealth  
About war  
About peace  
About love  
About life in general

It's time I write about myself.

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